

---

## "NAFTA IS A DEATH SENTENCE"

-Subcomandante Marcos  
Zapatista National Liberation Army

---

With the recent implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement there has been ample arguments in favor of and against NAFTA. Proponents claim it is beneficial to workers and business alike, but workers see things differently.

More and more people, in fact, are agreeing with Marcos, that NAFTA is a death sentence. Regressive to workers, regressive to the economy, and even economically fatal to struggling workers internationally, NAFTA is facing, and has faced, an enormous opposition by the public throughout Canada, the United States and Mexico.

The arguments for and against NAFTA are broad, and while proponent's arguments are easily accessible, the opposition to NAFTA has struggled to be heard. It is now time to rectify the unequal volume of debate and let the opposition be understood. NAFTA's opposition can be found in all countries affected and in thousands of work places. The international opposition to NAFTA is crucial in considering its problematic ends.

---

\$1

Haymarket Press



DISTRIBUTION

# Opposing

15

# NAFTA

---

International Opposition To The  
North American Free Trade  
Agreement

---

## Jason Justice

---





- 
- <sup>23</sup> Herbert, Bob, *The New York Times*, "Sliding Pay Scale," February 6, 1996.
- <sup>24</sup> Cockburn, Alexander, *The Los Angeles Times*, "Distorting NAFTA on Both Sides," November, 19, 1993.
- <sup>25</sup> Chomsky, Noam, as reported in his speech, "The Clinton Vision," Washington D.C., 1994.
- <sup>26</sup> As quoted in *First World Ha! Ha! Ha!*, 1995, by Subcommandante Marcos of the Zapatista Liberation Army during an interview with Medea Benjamén, pg. 67.
- <sup>27</sup> Chomsky, Noam, *Keeping the Rabble In Line*, pg. 185.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 185-186.
- <sup>29</sup> Vance, David, *Love and Rage*, "The Struggle in Mexico for Union Independence: SUTAR is Under Attack," April/May, 1996.
- <sup>30</sup> As written by Noam Chomsky in an article in *First World Ha! Ha! Ha!*, 1995, pg. 179.

# Opposing NAFTA

---

International Opposition To The  
North American Free Trade  
Agreement

Jason Justice

---

Haymarket Press - AK Press Distribution



Opposing NAFTA  
Written by Jason Justice

Originally Published 1996 by **Haymarket Press**  
No Copyright.

Feel free to reprint and distribute, in  
part or in full, in whatever form desired.

Special Thanks to: Malini Cadambi, Kathleen Weaver, and  
Bill and Ramsey at AK Press.

Distributed by **AK Press**



P.O. Box 40682  
San Francisco, CA  
94140-0682

AK Press can also be reached in Great Britain at:  
AK Press, P.O. Box 12766,  
Edinburgh, Scotland, EH8 9YE

11 Chomsky, Noam, *Keeping The Rabble In Line*, Common Courage Press, 1994, pg. 238

12 Engel, Eliot, *The New York Times*, "Why I Voted Against It," November 21, 1993.

13 Kraul, Chris, *The Los Angeles Times*, "U.S. Exports To Mexico Flourish Under NAFTA," May 20, 1994.

14 Pete Green, District Attorney of Texas, as quoted by Tumulty, Karen, *Los Angeles Times*, "Bitter Debate Results in a House Divided," November 18, 1993.

15 Clinton, President Bill, as quoted by Jackson, Robert, *The Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1993.

16 Herman, Edward S., *Triumph of the Market*, South End Press, Boston, 1995, pg. 54.

17 Lee, Thea, *The Wall Street Journal*, "Warnings on Nafta: Sadly, We Were Right," December, 7, 1995.

18 Sterngold, James, *The New York Times*, "Nafta Take-Off: Some Jobs Lost, Others Gained," October 9, 1995.

19 Davis, Bob, *The Wall Street Journal*, "Two Years Later, The Promises Used To Sell Nafta Haven't Come True, but Its Foes Were Wrong, Too," October 26, 1995.

20 Allen, Terry, *Covert Action Quarterly*, "Covert Briefs," Winter, No. 55, 1995-1996.

21 As quoted in *First World, Ha! Ha! Ha!*, edited by Elaine Katzenburger, City Lights Books, 1995, pg. 178, Quoted by Noam Chomsky and as documented by Tim Golden in an undated issue of *The New York Times*.

22 As reported by Edward Herman, *Z Magazine*, "Mexican Meltdown," September 1995.



## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Washington Post*, "The Vote On NAFTA," November 16, 1993. No specific author was credited for this article.

<sup>2</sup> Tumulty, Karen and Lauter, David, *Los Angeles Times*, Washington Edition, "Trade: Clinton Winning Over Converts," November 17, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Gershberg, Alec, *The New York Times*, "U.S. Consumers Gain From Mexico Trade Pact," September 17, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Herman, Edward S., *Z Magazine*, "Mexican Meltdown," September, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> *The Los Angeles Times*, "Gallup Poll Finds 46% Opposed, 38% in Favor of NAFTA," November 9, 1993. No author was credited for this article.

<sup>6</sup> Chomsky, Noam, this statement was made by professor Chomsky during an anti-NAFTA speech entitled "The Clinton Vision," and was recorded in 1994 in Washington D.C.. Available on Compact Disk from AK Press in San Francisco.

<sup>7</sup> As documented by Edward Herman, *Z magazine*, "Mexican Meltdown" September, 1995

<sup>8</sup> *The Los Angeles Times*, "Mexicans Protest NAFTA as U.S. Lawmakers Visit," October 24, 1993. No author credited for this article.

<sup>9</sup> As quoted in *Zapatistas!*, Autonomedia, New York, 1994, pg. 72. This statement was made by an unidentified Zapatista soldier from Ocosingo, Chiapas, Mexico in an interview transcribed in this book.

<sup>10</sup> Parenti, Michael, *Against Empire*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1995, pg. 55.

## Introduction

The various conflicts inherent in transnational expansion and trade are not new ones. They were born along with multinational business power long before the current acts of free trade emerged. The extent to which the term "trade" has been used, however, and the extent to which workers and business potentates have been polarized, is extreme with the ratification of modern trade acts.

With the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) workers have been internationally opposed to the degree to which business transnationalism has affected, and will continue to affect, workers negatively. The reasons why opponents of NAFTA despise its prospects and actions are matched, however, by the proponent's multiplicity of justifications for the need of a NAFTA. The arguments from both points of view are diverse and even confusing.

Prior to the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement the media was greatly in favor of NAFTA. It was difficult, in fact, to overlook the class loyalties of the press. Yet, following NAFTA's passage the media became slightly more accepting to divergent points of view on the subject. The *New York Times*, for example, the largest and arguably most important newspaper in the country, had very little representation of opponent's points of view prior to NAFTA's passage, however, directly following the ratification of NAFTA the *Times* allowed some criticism to be expressed by those who questioned the positivity of NAFTA.



Since NAFTA's passage, both privileged sectors as well as less fortunate ones have felt the results. It is generally known, though not to what degree, that economically prosperous corporations are further prospering due to NAFTA while the common toiling classes of Canada, the United States and Mexico are suffering. To what extent these effects are having is sometimes lost in the ample distortions or misunderstandings presented to the public via the public information outlets.

It becomes necessary, when a subject of great social significance becomes misrepresented, to organize the information allotted about the subject and document it for public accessibility. With NAFTA, this is what I have attempted to do.

Within this primer, *Opposing NAFTA*, I have attempted to represent the proponent's points of view while countering those view points with documentation of opponent's arguments. I do not, within this primer, pretend to be objective. I oppose NAFTA for many of the same reasons incorporated in this writing. I do, however, see it as necessary to introduce normally understood points of view by those in favor of NAFTA to adequately argue against it.

This primer has been written to decipher the misunderstandings about NAFTA so that those opposed to it, or those confused by it, can more easily come to their own conclusion based on the facts I have incorporated about the subject. This is not a primer of solutions to the problems of NAFTA, but there are few bad ways to confront what is already negative. This is simply an argument, in opposition to NAFTA, which I hope will inform people and bring them together to do whatever is necessary to rectify the wrongs.

women Republican politicians such as Patrick Buchanan actually oppose NAFTA, and are concerned about workers, or are simply looking for alternative voter support. Regardless of their reasons, however, they're forgetting one thing that many NAFTA opponents are painfully aware of: this is a business run society, if you want to achieve political success you must conform to business demands. As a result, for whatever reasons U.S. "leaders" oppose NAFTA it is unlikely their demands will be met.

The unfortunate reality, then, is that we cannot, and should not, rely on those in power to solve the problems of NAFTA. It is working people who should fight NAFTA and working people who can fight it. Unless organized workers can confront NAFTA it may continue unabated.

The anti-NAFTA cry of the oppressed Mexican working class is not an unreasonable one. Their perception of NAFTA as fatal is not exaggerated. Furthermore, with the decline in wages and the rise in unemployment in the United States and Canada, the polarized sectors of the elite and the poor are, indeed, causing somewhat of an economic demise for workers everywhere. NAFTA, and the concept of free trade inherent in all such negotiations, is devastating for working people world wide; there are few advantages to international poverty.

Those most injured by the North American Free Trade Agreement, or by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or by whatever such acts affect workers negatively in each country imposed upon, are also those persons who will have to circumvent its effects. Since the less fortunate majority throughout Canada, Mexico and the United States are, and will continue to be, that which faces the greatest problems evoked by NAFTA, then the opposition which emerges from this majority, in whatever form it takes, should be understood, and, by all means, justified.



exploited by U.S. business power then NAFTA truly is a death sentence for the people of Mexico.

Mexican unions also have trouble organizing in Mexico. "Finding a way to support the union movement in Mexico has always been hard, because the government has actively sought to control, buy-off, or eliminate independent unions," writes a journalist in a recent 1996 issue of *Love and Rage*, "Unions are our only defense against international corporations."<sup>29</sup> While Mexican unions struggle, fears invoked by transnational business against the Mexican working class are quite real. In fact, "It has not taken long for such fears to be realized," writes Chomsky,:

Shortly after the NAFTA vote in Congress, workers were fired from Mexican Honeywell and GE plants for attempting to organize independent unions. This is standard practice. The Ford Motor Company fired its entire Mexican work force at one plant in 1987, eliminating the union contract and rehiring workers at far lower salaries. Brutal repression crushed protests. Volkswagen, with the backing of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) followed suit in 1992, firing its fourteen thousand Mexican workers and rehiring only those who renounced independent union leaders.<sup>30</sup>

### Opposing NAFTA

With the cruel realities that are growing in Mexico because of NAFTA, with the impoverishment of Canadian and U.S. workers, with the increased polarization of classes and the growth of the "third world at home" in the United States, and with the potential conflict in consumer prices and purchasing abilities, it would seem reasonable that many people would oppose NAFTA. Recently, in fact, NAFTA has reemerged as a central topic for debate as a result of the 1996 presidential elections. People such as Patrick Buchanan, Ross Perot and others have all rejected NAFTA.

Politicians, however, are not the ones who are truly going to feel the negative effects of NAFTA. It is questionable whether or not anti-gay, anti-immigrant, anti-

## Opposing NAFTA

On January 1st, 1993, the Clinton Administration rejoiced as their fight for free trade prevailed with the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Along with President Clinton, United States corporations also grinned, as did many wealthy investors, business persons and potential commissars. NAFTA, an offspring of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, was promising new jobs, advanced market compatibility, economic development throughout Canada, Mexico and the United States and cheaper consumer products. But while some rejoiced, many others mourned, cringed and rejected the agreement. Claims of prosperity were distrusted by the working class, Mexican civilians detested the agreement and many people believed the opposite of the benefits promised by NAFTA. Unfortunately, many people who rejected the ratification of NAFTA are now experiencing the regressive results of it



which they predicted and opposed prior to NAFTA's passage.

The primary purpose of the North American Free Trade Agreement, according to its proponents, is to increase trade between Mexico, United States and Canada. It eliminates tariffs and barriers which slow the trade and production of transnational business entities. Truckers can now, courtesy of NAFTA, freely travel through all three countries and help to ship goods across borders more efficiently. As a result, what proponents call, "free trade" will flourish. Free trade, and NAFTA, then, from the state's eye view, reflect the efficient system of business productivity, initiated by the United States.

Although globalized production has been an integral part of business productivity for a long time, it was crucial that NAFTA pass anyway. NAFTA ensures substantial profits for multi-national corporations. It is primary that obstacles to further globalizing production in Mexico be eliminated. NAFTA helps to undermine environmental protection regulations, it undermines minimum wage laws, and it ensures that Mexico becomes dependent upon U.S. business power. In the United States profits are hindered by protectionist regulations; worker rights, unions, environmental regulations for clean air and water, and other restrictions; in Mexico NAFTA helps to eliminate these "problems." With the aid of NAFTA Mexico now has the lowest protection rates in the world.

Prior to the passage of NAFTA, United States decision makers realized the importance of reflecting and further establishing adept business power. As reported in *The Washington Post*, NAFTA represents, "the American responsibility to lead...the world [in] its stability and prosperity...It's not only here in this country that NAFTA has taken on an extraordinary symbolic importance. The vote on NAFTA requires each member of Congress to think carefully about the future of America."<sup>1</sup>

The future of America, according to the media, would be one in which the general population of Canada,

Chiapas, as well as the people of Oaxaca, Veracruz, Quintana Roo, Guerrero, and Sonora were the sacrificial lambs of NAFTA.<sup>26</sup>

The "sacrifice" of Mexican civilian industry will not increase employment in new U.S. factories in Mexico, it will simply further breed destitution in an already impoverished country. Noam Chomsky explains:

The leading financial journal in Mexico, which is very pro-NAFTA, estimated that Mexico would lose about twenty-five percent of its manufacturing capacity in the first few years and about fifteen percent of its manufacturing labor force. In addition, cheap U.S. agriculture are expected to drive even more people off the land. That's going to mean a substantial increase in the unemployed work force in Mexico, which of course will drive down wages.<sup>27</sup>

### Undermining Unions

Some of the problems U.S. workers will face with the future of NAFTA may be remedied if U.S. unions can regain stability and organization and defend themselves against transnational business tactics. In Mexico, however, U.S. unions cannot, even if they were better organized, adequately defend the Mexican working class. Chomsky further points out:

...organizing is essentially impossible [in Mexico]. Notice that although corporations can operate internationally, unions cannot. So though unions can operate in different states of the U.S., they cannot cross borders, which means there is no way for the work force to fight back against the internationalization of production.<sup>28</sup>

With U.S. unions undermined in Mexico it is sad, and perhaps frightening, to dwell on the extents to which Mexican workers can be exploited by U.S. and Canadian transnational businesses. If the workers of Mexico are abused as severely as other workers in Southern Nations



emerges with this issue when it is also taken into account that U.S. and Canadian workers are losing, and will be losing, wages and jobs because of NAFTA. As more product is available for consumers with greater profit margins for their manufacturers there will also be less people who can afford to buy these goods. This growing gap between regressing consumer wages and inflating consumer product prices may even lead to increased crime rates such as theft, being born out of necessity. The conflict inherent in this factor casts a problematic future for both the rich and the poor.

### **Devastating Mexico**

While the United States and Canada are having, and will continue to have, devastating outcomes for the people of their lands, the most impoverished country of the three directly affected by NAFTA, Mexico, is facing, and will face, the most intense and atrocious economic backlash that NAFTA has to offer. This is, in fact, part of the purpose of NAFTA and the result of locking Mexico in. With struggling unions, and the target of cheap, exploitable workers, Mexico can easily be dominated by U.S. and Canadian transnational businesses. As a result, small Mexican business is being, and will continue to be, crushed by U.S. and Canadian business power. Similar to large businesses that move into small business neighborhoods and wipe out the competition in the United States, the same thing is happening in Mexico, but Mexican workers are forced into mostly U.S. owned businesses and coerced to toil long hours at sub-standard wages. As Subcomandante Marcos of the EZLN stated in an interview:

NAFTA is a death sentence for the indigenous people. NAFTA sets up competition among farmers, but how can our campesinos—who are mostly illiterate—compete with U.S. and Canadian farmers? And look at this rocky land we have here. How can we compete with the land in California, or in Canada? So the people of

Mexico and the United States would prosper. The prosperity, in fact, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, "would create a potential market of 360 million to 370 million people—then nearly twice that, Clinton pointed out, if it is expanded eventually to include all of Latin America."<sup>2</sup> Aside from the rise in employment supposedly inherent in market expansion, the consumer market should also be pleased by the future drop in consumer prices. As one writer for *The New York Times* put it, "...consumers should be given the opportunity to buy the highest quality products at the lowest possible price, and the trade agreement should increase their choices."<sup>3</sup>

### **International Opposition**

The economic desires of the majority of the population of each nation, affected by government and business decisions, is understood from all points of view. More jobs, less inflation and usually greater prosperity sums the desires of the proletariat. Yet, while NAFTA made promises ensuring, at least to some degree, such economic and social achievements, its opponents are quite numerous and see more fabrication than reality achieved through NAFTA. Economists, in fact, documented an overwhelming opposition to NAFTA long before it was ever ratified. Edward Herman, for example, documented the public opinion polls in *Z Magazine*:

A series of polls during 1992 and 1993 showed that, despite the propaganda onslaught by the Bush and Clinton administrations, business, and the media, a majority of the public was hostile to NAFTA - e.g., in September 1992, 57 percent con, 33 percent pro, 10 percent no opinion (*National Journal*) ; in March 1993, 63 percent con, 31 percent pro, 6 percent no opinion (Gallup/CNN); in July 1993, 65 percent con, 28 percent pro, 7 percent no opinion.<sup>4</sup>

As the ratification of NAFTA neared, the opposition in the United States remained the greater. According to



Gallup polls reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, "The public is leaning against the North American Free Trade Agreement, with only 38% in favor and 46% opposed."<sup>5</sup> M.I.T. Professor Noam Chomsky also exposed the public's opposition:

In the case of NAFTA, in all three countries - U.S., Mexico, and Canada, it was overwhelmingly opposed. In the United States it was running pretty steadily at about 60% opposition...In Mexico the latest polls that were taken showed 47% pro-NAFTA, [showing] general opposition in all three states.<sup>6</sup>

Recent polls, however, show that the Mexican opposition to NAFTA was far greater than was previously interpreted. ABC News/CNN polls, for example, revealed that the greatest majority of the Mexican population detested NAFTA, running at approximately 70 percent opposition.<sup>7</sup>

In Mexico the opposition was seen physically as well. In October, prior to the passage of NAFTA, "...more than 2,000 marchers opposed to the proposed pact filed through the streets...to deplore "imperialism" and the "brutal exploitation" of Mexican laborers." It was, "the largest demonstration to date here [Mexico City] against the North American Free Trade Agreement."<sup>8</sup> The intense disapproval of NAFTA was also revealed when, on January 1st, 1994, the same day that NAFTA went into effect, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) began the Chiapas revolution which is still being fought today. As one member of the rebellion put it, "This is our response to the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, because this represents a death sentence for all of the Indigenous ethnicities in Mexico."<sup>9</sup>

### ***Intrafirm Transfers***

The incredible opposition to NAFTA didn't emerge from misunderstandings about the effects that NAFTA would have on the workers of the three main countries affected by

consumer prices negatively. In the United States, for example, a problem is emerging known as "the third world at home," in which class differences are becoming so extreme that sectors of the United States are impoverished to the point of third world conditions, while other, much smaller, sectors are saturated in economic surplus. The enormous displacement of jobs due to free trade agreements such as NAFTA has caused once-industrialized cities, such as South Central Los Angeles, to become deserted of jobs. The factories, as explained previously, have packed up, moved to Mexico to exploit workers and make greater profits and have left the former U.S. employees jobless. NAFTA makes international intrafirm transfers easier, cheaper, and more accessible to the rich. As a result, class polarization increases and destitution rises.

According to research documented by Noam Chomsky, approximately 70% of the United States working class will face losses in either wages or jobs within the next few years due to NAFTA.<sup>25</sup> This 70% obviously makes up the largest body of workers but mostly affects women, African-Americans, Latina and Latino workers and other workers of color. These workers make up the majority of laborers forced into semi-skilled and low-skilled jobs; NAFTA benefits only privileged sectors.

### ***Consumer Conflict***

Canadian and U.S. consumers will face great confusion as a result of NAFTA. While NAFTA promises a decline in prices of consumer goods there is no reason to believe such promises will be fulfilled. If NAFTA provides greater profit margins, which it does, then why would business elite undermine those profits to make consumer goods more accessible? If that were the case then one could argue that NAFTA was passed on behalf of the problems of rising inflation, but that is hardly the case. It would not be ironic, then, to assume that inflation of consumer product prices will rise along with profit margins. The conflict



### ***Locking Mexico In***

The idea that NAFTA could benefit the multitudes throughout Mexico, the U.S. and Canada is negated by the loss of jobs and decline in wages in these countries; it shows that NAFTA was never about benefits for the populace. Alexander Cockburn accurately wrote, "NAFTA is centrally about protecting the rights of U.S. and Canadian investors in Mexico, locking into a dependency path, foreclosing radical options."<sup>24</sup> Mexico is, indeed, the main target of Canada and the United States with NAFTA. Mexican workers are easy to abuse and easy to keep in line; "locking Mexico in" ensures a future in which this can continue and corporate profits can increase.

The issue of "locking Mexico in" may be the most important reason for NAFTA's existence. Long before NAFTA was ratified it was well understood that NAFTA was to lock the Mexican economy into a permanently exploitable state. It is necessary to make sure that Mexico cannot return to any worker or environmentally protectionist ways, and that the possibility of any growing democracy is undermined. With NAFTA these issues are suppressed, and Mexico becomes locked into a dependency path of the United States.

Locking Mexico into such a dependency path means intrafirm transfers, growing profit margins, and international exploitation can maintain and increase its prosperity, while workers face its poverty. While other issues about NAFTA are debatable, or while NAFTA-related unemployment statistics may be questionable, there are few who can deny that NAFTA aims at locking Mexico in.

### ***Polarization***

Locking Mexico in, and the transfer of goods from the United States and Canada to Mexico and back into the formers, causes more problems than just joblessness in these countries. It also increases polarization and affects

the agreement. The predicted foul outcome for workers was, and is, based on the reality of the agreement. What business elite and national leaders are calling "free trade" is perceived quite differently by those opposed to it. Under NAFTA, trade realistically means increased profit margins and greater exploitation of workers. Instead of "trading" with our neighbors, U.S. businesses, in mercantilist fashion, look for cheaper, unorganized labor in more easily worker exploitable countries to replace first world domestic wage laborers. Basically, what this means is that instead of dealing with "pampered and unionized Western" workers in the United States, businesses can now move their factories to Southern countries such as Mexico and hire workers at a fraction of the price without the bother of unions. Raw materials are essentially produced in the United States, shipped to Mexico and assembled cheaply, and shipped right back into the United States for consumption.

The result of such "trade" means that when United States businesses move their manufacturing to more easily worker exploitable countries they leave U.S. workers without jobs. As Professor Michael Parenti explains, "It is well known that General Motors has been closing down factories in the USA. Less well known is that for many years GM has been spending millions of dollars abroad on new auto plants in countries where wages are far less than what American auto workers are paid. This means bigger profits for GM and more unemployment for Detroit."<sup>10</sup> Noam Chomsky describes this process well:

About half of what are called U.S. exports to Mexico are just intrafirm transfers. They don't enter the Mexican market. There's no meaningful sense in which they're exports to Mexico. It means Ford Motor Company has components constructed here and then ships them to a plant which happens to be on the other side of the border where they get much lower wages...Then they ship them back here.<sup>11</sup>

Opponents of NAFTA also see it as regressive for all workers in every country affected. Mexico and the United



States are the two greatest countries affected, however, and many believe that, "The agreement [NAFTA], as written, puts the wages of workers in the United States under increased pressure from low-wage labor and poor working conditions in Mexico. I believe it could erode the standard of living for United States workers [and]...the lives of working Mexicans,"<sup>12</sup> wrote one NAFTA opponent in *The New York Times*.

### Promises

There would have been little opposition to NAFTA if it did not affect workers negatively. According to NAFTA's proponents, however, it has been generally beneficial since its implementation and should continue to be. An *LA Times* article points out, for instance, that, "First-quarter imports of Mexican goods and services grew to \$11.3 billion, up 22% from the same period in 1993, bolstering proponents view that NAFTA is good policy for Mexico as well."<sup>13</sup> This increase in imports and profits for privileged sectors is supposed to justify the problematic ends. Another article, in fact, says, "It's close to amusing to hear of the righteous indignation coming out of the NAFTA opponents."<sup>14</sup> It's not so amusing to the workers losing jobs or suffering from declining wages, however.

In an effort to pacify an angry working class, President Clinton attempted to calm the nation with promises about the future with NAFTA. He said NAFTA will, "create 200,000 new high paying jobs in the next two years...American workers have nothing to fear."<sup>15</sup> Statistics such as those which Clinton uses when predicting the future of employment rises reflect the work of those economists who also benefit from NAFTA. As Edward Herman points out, "The leading economists are affluent members of the Western elite, with ties to business and government as advisers, consultants and recipients of data and awards."<sup>16</sup> In other words, the increase in jobs and prosperity which Clinton notes may apply to wealthy sectors

only, or may even be grossly fabricated. The fear which workers "shouldn't have" is based on very real threats to the majority of the people of Mexico, the United States and Canada.

### Working Class Regression

The promises of the Clinton Administration have not come true and opponents of NAFTA see the results quite clearly. As reported by one writer in *The Wall Street Journal*, "We predicted that free trade would not be a ticket to prosperity, democracy, and equality for the Mexican economy. We're sorry we turned out to be so right, given the enormous costs now being paid by the Mexican people and by those workers in the U.S. who have lost their jobs or seen their wages eroded because of NAFTA."<sup>17</sup> *The New York Times* reported that, "tens of thousands of factory jobs in this country have been lost since the agreement [NAFTA] took effect,"<sup>18</sup> while another article documented that, "the surging trade deficit with Mexico has cost the U.S. 225,000 jobs."<sup>19</sup> A more recent 1995-1996 study shows that, "381,000 jobs have already been lost,"<sup>20</sup> since NAFTA's implementation.

Also, a threatening forecast of major job losses and wage declination in the future due to NAFTA has been predicted by several economists. *The New York Times* quoted one economist who stated, "that several million Mexicans will probably lose their jobs within the next five years after the accord [NAFTA],"<sup>21</sup> and Harvard economist Edward Leamer predicted an average \$1,000 annual loss per year for the average worker before the end of the century.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, a 1996 study of declining wages was documented in *The New York Times*, "the value of the minimum wage in 1995 dollars will soon slip below \$4 an hour," and the, "minimum wage will soon reach its lowest level since 1955."<sup>23</sup>